

Wright State University

CORE Scholar

Profiles of African-Americans: Their Roles in
Shaping Wright State University

University Archives

6-3-1992

Alphonso L. Smith Interview, College of Science and Mathematics, Wright State University

Alyce Earl Jenkins

Wright State University - Main Campus

Alphonso L. Smith

Wright State University - Main Campus

Follow this and additional works at: https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/archives_african

Repository Citation

Jenkins, A. E., & Smith, A. L. (1992). Alphonso L. Smith Interview, College of Science and Mathematics, Wright State University. .
https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/archives_african/2

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Profiles of African-Americans: Their Roles in Shaping Wright State University by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact library-corescholar@wright.edu.

Profiles of African-Americans That Helped Shape Wright State University

Interview with Alphonso L. Smith

Date of Interview: June 3, 1992

Interviewer: Alyce Earl Jenkins, College of Education and Human Services

Interviewee: Alphonso L. Smith, College of Science and Mathematics

Alyce Earl Jenkins: As we continue our look at African-Americans faculty, students, and staff who have been employed here at Wright State throughout its existence and who have made contributions to the University, I am talking today with Professor Alphonso Smith, who is Assistant Professor of Mathematics and is also Assistant Dean for the College of Science and Mathematics. Thanks for joining us today Al.

Alphonso Smith: My pleasure.

AJ: Al, you came here in 1964, before Wright State campus became Wright State University. How did you learn about the campus and the position in mathematics at that time?

AS: Well, Bob Dixon and I who were undergraduate students at Ohio State back in 1957 had two classes together, and we became friends, and Bob graduated a year before I did at Ohio State and went on to Illinois and finished up his—no he finished up at Ohio State, and went on to Illinois. And one Saturday morning while I was still a graduate student he knocked on my door, and it was early and I almost didn't answer the door, but I did and went down and he was there, he had come back and visited from Illinois and said, "How would I like to join him in this new venture down in Dayton, Ohio?" And I said, "What," and he told me that Ohio State, which operated a branch campus down at that time at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, was planning on building a full-fledged campus and he had been asked to be what was then the Coordinator—later became Chairman—Coordinator of Mathematics at, then, the Dayton campus, and asked, "Would I like to join him in this venture?" Well I had never even been to Dayton before and hadn't heard of it, so I told him I'd think about it, and he told me to go over into the Graduate School and talk to "Ned" Moulton, who was then Director of Off-Campus Education at Ohio State.

I knew Ned Moulton in a way because Ned Moulton was the one who passed out all my National Science Foundation checks every month, so I knew him. And when I, later that week, went over and talked to Ned Moulton, he had this big, full picture of the Wright State—Dayton—campus, and what it was supposed to look like twenty-five years from now, with football fields and basketball arenas and dormitories and hospitals and everything, and saying, “We want to build a full-fledged university down there and it’s gonna be the MIT of the Midwest and we’re gonna specialize in the biological sciences. But in order to be strong in biological sciences, we have to have a strong mathematics and science and English and all, the whole ball of wax, and wouldn’t I like to be a charter member of this enterprise?”

AJ: Mhm.

AS: And I thought about it and said, “Yes.”

AJ: That’s great! So you didn’t see an ad in the paper—

AS: No.

AJ: —or anything like that? Your social network got you down here—

AS: Yeah.

AJ: —and then you and Bob worked throughout the years.

AS: Throughout the years, yes.

AJ: About how many faculty were hired that year, and did the total number of faculty in 1964 include still some people who were employed at Ohio State and Miami U plus the new faculty that were hired or did you just have one faculty?

AS: No, there were actually two faculties: those of us who were in Science and Engineering—that’s what that college was called or that unit was called at that time, Science and Engineering. We were actually employed by Ohio State and we were on the Ohio State payroll, and we had to adhere to and follow the policies of Ohio State. Everybody else, people in education, liberal arts, business, were all hired by Miami University, and they were actually on the faculty of Miami, and we were actually on two different pay schedules. I think we were hired in August, and so we were on an August to August contract and the people at Miami were on a different contract; I don’t know what it was now but it wasn’t on the same, and we got paid by different people, etcetera, so...

AJ: I see.

AS: ...so we were one happy family down here but we were under two different administrative sets of rules.

AJ: I see. Now were you the only black person in that group that entering faculty group?

AS: No, there was another faculty member who was hired by Miami and who later returned to Miami, Heanon Wilkins, who was a Professor of Spanish at the time, and he went back to school and then when he finished he went back to Miami, and he's down at Miami now.

AJ: I see! I have a picture here of people who had been at the university for about twenty years at the time, and it was the twentieth-year anniversary—

AS: Yeah, that—

AJ: —so these are the people who came down in 1964—

AS: —those were the, and who were still here—

AJ: —who were still here at that time—

AS: —here twenty-years later, yes, uh-huh.

AJ: —and on this picture I see that we have three black people: Millie Waddell, Mary Wiley, and you.

AS: Right, that's correct, yeah.

AJ: And you were the only faculty person and they were staff.

AS: Yeah, but Heanon had left; Heanon only was here three or four years, I guess.

AJ: I see. What size were your classes when you started working?

AS: Well, unfortunately they were large.

AJ: Now what did you teach, you taught a freshman course and a sophomore course in math?

AS: Well. it was actually business mathematics, the first courses I taught here that first year were business mathematics. I forget the exact title but they were mainly for business students. And they were large classes; I had come from Ohio State where I had twenty...twenty-eight students in a class, and my first class here was a hundred and sixty-five students.

AJ: Oh my!

AS: Very large. I had two classes, two sections of the same class, and I forgot how often it met...three or four times a week I guess. It wasn't called business mathematics, but that's what it was, business—

AJ: Did you have any black students in your first class?

AS: I had about three or four in each of my two sections, and one of whom I still see around from time to time, okay yeah.

AJ: I see. Generally, how were you received by the faculty and students here at Wright State?

AS: Well, we were a young faculty—I don't know what the average age was, but most of us, particularly most of us in the Science and Mathematics, but I think most of us were generally right out of college, not more than two or three years out of college—so we were a young faculty, and we were all learning, we were idealists, I guess it's probably too much to say we were pioneers, but we sort of had a pioneering experience. There were no traditions, so that wasn't something you had to break into. I mean, we all were equal in those days. So it was easy in that regard.

AJ: What about students reception of you?

AS: Well, I thought that was good; there were some problems, not my problems, but there were some problems with students in general that first year. I don't know if you know, but Wright State opened a year earlier than it was supposed to open. I think when they first broke ground and planned for this campus to open, it wasn't supposed to open until 1965. It opened, for some reason things got on the fast track, and it opened a year earlier, and I think students, particularly the full-time students, hadn't planned on going to college in the Dayton campus. And so, some of the problems we saw were that students—we thought we got a lot of students who had planned to go to college at the last minute, parents didn't know if they would send them off so they thought they would go over here to the Dayton campus and try that out for a while. And I think that those students thought that this would be the thirteenth grade and weren't willing to work as just we thought they should be willing to work. So there were those types of problems, I think, that first year with the full-time students. Now I didn't teach at night in the evening program, so I don't know about the part-timers who came in the evening, but the early students were not anxious to work hard as we thought they should've been.

AJ: I see. Now you mentioned that the freshman faculty class, all of you...most of you were young and you had just come out of college and everything, and one of the questions I had plan to ask you was if you had a mentor while you were here, and how would you respond to that since all of you were about in the same boat?

AS: Well, I think we didn't have a mentor in that sense but Ned Moulton was a good guide for us, I think. I really attribute a lot of the development of the people in Science and Mathematics because we were two [faculties]. I mean, we weren't a single faculty, in those days, although we tried to be and we did everything we could. But we were different, we had different sets of rules. We in the Science and Engineering College knew that this place would one day be independent, and Ned Moulton used to say, "The rules that you make down there are the rules you're gonna have to live under, you know. So I'll give you guidance and everything but we won't try to control you from Ohio State." So we developed a sense of independence, pioneering independence—we made mistakes of course, but he allowed us to make our mistakes at that time. But he was probably the one mentor, but his mentoring was, "Be independent, and do your research, and do your scholarship, and do your teaching, and things will work out. But you're gonna have to live under the rules and the conditions that you make down there."

AJ: Here in 1992, how important do you think mentoring is for young African-American faculty coming—?

AS: Well, I think it's important. I would back up one step here is that I was an NSF fellow at Ohio State and the first year of my NSF fellowship, we were required to participate in a seminar—they really call it a course but it was more of a seminar—in college teaching, in which we were told the ins and out of college teaching, the expectations, how you comport yourself, some of the problems you'd have to deal with in terms of tenure, research, and classroom preparation and addressing the students. So that was invaluable to me. Not everybody, of course, had participated in that, but we were able to share and talk with each other about our experiences. So I would say next to Ned Moulton, it was Bob Dixon who at least had been to one other place other than Ohio State, he'd been up at Illinois, and then there was Marc Low and Leon Low who had been at Illinois, and everybody else who was in the Mathematics unit at the time had been Ohio State people. But we were able to talk and communicate with each other—

AJ: —So, in 1992, you feel that mentoring is very important?

AS: Oh yeah! It's very important, to get back, yes. And it's important for, I think, faculty members to know what the score is, know what the ropes are, know what is expected of them, and you can have that mentoring from various places. You can have it from people in your own department, which I think is where it should come from, but if you don't have anybody in your department with whom you feel comfortable, then it's important to develop it elsewhere. Either around campus or at other campuses, but I think it's important, and particularly now since the campus is more established, there are a lot of faculty here more established; people aren't all in the same boat. I can remember when I went back to the Mathematics Department in 1982 after having been

away for a while, I didn't know everybody, and I suddenly noticed this age difference between the young faculty and the new faculty.

AJ: Part of being a university faculty member involves service, serving on the committees. What kind of—and I know that you have served on a lot of committees—which of those committees do you consider to be most significant, where you made a significant contribution which benefitted faculty and staff or what have you?

AS: Well, I guess the first thing I would say is that every committee that I have served on, at the time I thought was the most important one. But having been away from those types of committees and having a longer perspective now to deal with, I would say the one that I really think I had the most impact on was the General Education Committee, which you and I served on together—

AJ: Yes.

AS: —back in the late-1970s, early 1980s.

AJ: That was a difficult committee too.

AS: Yeah! But you notice that, even though the general education plan that we adopted and the Academic Council adopted and the faculty later rejected was subsequently adopted—

AJ: Adopted, yes!

AS: —by them, and that's the one—

AJ: —and they, yes—

AS: —we're operating under right now, so I—

AJ: —and they forgot from whence it came.

AS: Well, that's okay. I mean, the important thing is that what we had done—the work that we had done in those days—

AJ: That's right.

AS: —was the general education plan that was adopted.

AJ: And the interesting thing about it: some of the strong opponents to that plan were the ones who were the proponents—

AS: Right.

AJ: —of the plan later on.

AS: Later on, yeah. I guess we were ahead of our time, at that time! But that's certainly one of them that I take a lot of pride in. Now as I advise students, I don't have to wonder why this particular part of the general education plan is in place, you know, the students wonder. Another I think from my earlier days was when we—and you were a part of that too—we established the Bolinga scholarships, and I was sorry to see how that later turned out, but I think that we had eight or nine good years of that and we had a lot of good students—

AJ: A lot of good students.

AS: —who benefitted from that program. And so that was certainly one that I take a lot of pride and look back on with a lot of glee and affection.

AJ: And you also served on the athletic committees?

AS: Well right now I'm on the Athletic Council...

AJ: Okay.

AS: But I wasn't really that much involved in athletics except as a member of the Student Affairs Committee back—I don't know when this was—in the late-1960s. It was the forerunner of the Athletic Council and we set up the Athletic Program at that time. And Don Mohr became the first Athletic Director after Sandy wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole.

AJ: Okay. Service also means that you're involved out in the community, that you do service with different organizations out there. Have you worked with any community groups that you would like to talk about?

AS: Well I guess my main external community service group was with the United Way. I was with United Way about nine years, starting out in the village of Yellow Springs, being a member of the committee that put together the budget from Yellow Springs, and later with the Greene County United Way, and then subsequently with the Tri-County, Montgomery, Greene, and Preble County, United Ways. And that was very rewarding, exhausting but very rewarding service. And I still have good memories of my days with the United Way.

AJ: United Way is an interesting organization; I served eight years on it. It doesn't seem as though you're able to go on one of their committees and serve a year, it's a long-term commitment—

AS: No, no. It takes a year to get up to speed

AJ: —yes, and after you leave it, you feel “well okay I've done that and it was rewarding but I don't know whether I need another job at this point.” So you were in the

classroom—you came here in 1964—and you were in the classroom eight years. So in 1972 you left there and became an administrator.

AS: Well in 1972, I became partially an administrator, okay—

AJ: Oh, okay.

AS: —I was the Assistant Director of Affirmative Action for Faculty Affairs beginning in 1972 and became Director of Affirmative Action for the whole ball of wax in 1973. But I was the Assistant Affirmative Action Director for Faculty Affairs in 1972.

AJ: Now as Director of Affirmative Action here at Wright State University, what kinds of policies did you initiate or implement here that you can share with us now that would benefit women's rights?

AS: Well I think the first thing I had to do, even though there had been an Affirmative Action Director before me and the Affirmative Action Program here at Wright State may have been two or three years old in 1972—you know the director abruptly left in 1972—

AJ: Who was the director before you?

AS: I can't think of his name now...okay.

AJ: Because, see, I thought you were the first one?

AS: No, but there was somebody—but I wasn't involved in affirmative action except in the College. I was the Director of Minority Affairs in the College in 1972. So when my predecessor left I guess Dean Conley, Robert Conley, recommended me to Andrew Spiegel and Bob Kegerreis and Fred White, and so I became the Assistant Affirmative Action Director for Faculty Affairs. One of the problems I had was that at that time, before I came in, affirmative action dealt mainly with classified hiring. So what I did was to broaden it to include the whole scope, including faculty and administrative positions, and one of the problems we had was just gaining acceptance of hiring.

AJ: Yes.

AS: So I think the main thing we had there was to adopt the hiring policy guidelines to gain acceptance of affirmative action, I think, and throughout the University community, which I think we did do.

AJ: And I think the University was an early leader in that because I think many of the other universities just dealt with classified positions—

AS: That's true. That's true.

AJ: —and had not started looking at faculty positions, and so—

AS: That's true.

AJ: —I think we were one of the early leaders there.

AS: Yeah.

AJ: As Affirmative Action Director, you probably had meetings with other directors here in the state, and maybe nationally. How did Wright State compare with what other universities were doing at that time?

AS: Well—

AJ: And this was like 1972 to 1980, right?

AS: 1972 to 1982, yeah...We were better. I think Wright State was better positioned in affirmative action than the other state universities, but I would say not only better positioned than other state universities but other universities throughout the nation. I remember attending a conference I think about in 1975 or 1976 of national directors of affirmative action, and we indicated that a lot of the things that they were trying to do nationally we were already doing here in Ohio. We already had our Ohio Affirmative Action Offices Association, which the national organization was patterned after, when they learned about what we were doing here in Ohio. So Ohio was ahead, I think, but even in Ohio I think Wright State was a little bit better off than the other state universities, in the sense that we did not have the—at least I didn't have the—contention between the Affirmative Action Officer, that was myself, and the administration.

I had the full support—I felt I had then the full support—not necessarily as vigorous as I would have liked to have had it, but the full support of the President, Robert Kegerreis, and the Executive Vice President, Andrew Spiegel, to whom I reported at the time. So there was never any real arguments between President Kegerreis or Vice President Spiegel and me about what we should do: the scope of the Affirmative Action Director or the fact that we should have affirmative action and the fact that we would push hard and open up the hiring policies to be more inclusive. Whereas the other directors in Ohio were always fighting with their presidents, vice presidents, and in some cases their personnel directors because, in at least one or two cases, the affirmative action office was in the office of personnel and was subservient to personnel. I think here we clearly established a...I would say a supremacy, but at least an equality between affirmative action and personnel. The Office of Personnel didn't drive our hiring policies, I think. So we were better off in that—I've felt better off in that regard.

AJ: It's interesting that we had this, I guess you could call it like a model program, affirmative action program which included faculty back then. But yet, we haven't been able to attract and keep a lot of African-American faculty. We're still under fifty.

AS: Right.

AJ: I've been trying to come up with the number of black faculty and staff we've had over the years since I've been here, and I have difficulty because my memory doesn't go back—I can't remember everything. But I didn't reach a hundred as I was trying to—

AS: You mean in totality?

AJ: —In totality, of people who've come and gone and those who are still here. But—

AS: You might get close to a hundred, but you might have trouble reaching a hundred

AJ: So, now affirmative action, you were also dealing with affirmative action as for our student issues too, okay.

AS: Yeah the first year I guess I was Affirmative Action Director we had two other assistant directors of affirmative action. I mean I was the Director of Affirmative Action and we had an Assistant Director of Affirmative Action for Students, Bill Roberts—

AJ: Oh yes.

AS: —who was there, later became the Student Body President—

AJ: President; he's a lawyer now, isn't he?

AS: Oh yeah. And also we had an Assistant Director of Affirmative Action for Classified Staff. That was Patricia O'Brien. And I had asked Mrs. Bowersox, I can't remember her first name now, to be the Assistant Director of Affirmative Action for Unclassified Staff, but unfortunately she and her husband were about to accept a position elsewhere, so we didn't have that at the time.

AJ: I have here a picture of...I guess this is perhaps your first Affirmative Action Council?

AS: Yeah that's the Affirmative Action Advisory Council.

AJ: Yeah, your advisory council there, and I see some of the people here, Millie Waddell, and Frasier, and Madeline Apt—

AS: Yeah.

AJ: —and Pat Marx—

AS: —Pat Marx, yeah—

AJ: — is over at E&G Mound now—

AS: —Yeah, and Khurshid Ahmad. Interesting among those people, only three of us are here now: [Nasa Makely], Khurshid Ahmad, and myself.

AJ: I see.

AS: All of the others are retired, with the exception of Madeline Apt who has passed away.

AJ: Okay so you stay there until 1982, and then you return to the classroom. I have a picture here of you in the classroom at the chalkboard here with your mathematics, and then I have another picture here of you with some of the students who were there. What was it like when you returned to the classroom after having been away those years?

AS: Well...fortunately for me I had never left the classroom completely. I remember when I became the Director of Affirmative Action, I promised Bob Dixon who was—Bob Dixon served several stints as Chairman of Mathematics and Computer Science—but at the time I left to become the Director of Affirmative Action, the Mathematics Department and the Computer Science Department were splitting. The Computer Science Department grew out of the Mathematics Department, but they split the year I was leaving, and I remember Bob Dixon, who was Chairman of Mathematics but was going over to be Chairman of Computer Science asked me if I would continue to teach a class for Computer Science, and I says, “Yes, I’ll give you one class a year.” And that’s all I planned to teach was one class a year, but a little bit later than that Krishan Gorowara who became Chairman of Mathematics says, “Look Al, you’re giving Computer Science one class; why don’t you give us a class too?” So I say, “Okay, I’ll give you one class”—

AJ: So you never really left?

AS: —so I never really left. I taught two classes a year: one for Mathematics and one for Computer Science.

AJ: I see. Okay. And of course by that time there was a distinct difference in the student attitude toward learning than in 1964.

AS: Oh yeah. That’s right.

AJ: Okay, so it was during the time that you had returned back to the classroom that you became the Vice President—well, what we call the President—of the University Faculty. Tell me about that experience.

AS: Well, when I left the office of affirmative action and returned as a full-time faculty member, of course I was more willing to speak out on universal issues at that time than I was when I was Director of Affirmative Action. I mean, I was always involved in faculty issues but I wouldn't speak out publically about things that didn't necessarily deal with affirmative action at that time. So I became more of a champion, I guess, of faculty interests at that time, and I remember I think Charles—

AJ: You became a thorn in Administration's side.

AS: —Well, that's what Bob Kegerreis said at a dinner we were at recently. So I became involved in faculty governance, and more and more involved in faculty governance, and was appointed to several key committees in faculty governance, and was later elected Vice President-elect or President-elect of the Faculty in 1987, I guess, and served as President of the Faculty from 1988-1989.

AJ: Now you were the first black faculty president that we've had.

AS: Right, yeah. Hopefully there'll be others.

AJ: Yeah, hopefully. I think we have some in the pipeline.

AS: Okay.

AJ: I think we have some in the pipeline...As Faculty President, what was one of your greatest challenges?

AS: Well, I say the greatest challenge was just to keep on track the—what was then thirty-three, it's been streamlined somewhat since then—but thirty-three various committees of the faculty governance, and keeping them on track and making certain that they were meeting their timelines and addressing the issues that had been—

AJ: Did we have any real hot issues then?

AS: Well we had some that were subtle on the backburner, which was the conversion from the quarter system which we're on now to semester system. But that had been addressed, I think, a year or so before I became Faculty President, but it was still in the pipeline and I remember meeting with the President, and he said, "Well Ohio State's president is going to do it, and when Ohio State does it, we'll do it too." And I don't have any particular feeling for a semester or a quarter, but I think that it's the faculty that should determine, not the administration, which should determine whether we go semesters or quarters. And so that's what I've always fought for—

AJ: Yes.

AS: —the role of the faculty in determining, not whether we go one way or the other. That was one issue, and I think the other one was football.

AJ: Yeah...

AS: The NCAA was about to pass this “enabling legislation” which would allow students to have I think it was division 2A or division 3 football. And, although our president said he wasn’t for it one way or the other, he appointed a committee to study whether we should have football or not. And I happened to have been on that committee and saw which way that committee was going and I mobilized the faculty to vote against going football. I think although that was a temporary victory—I’m not certain that the issue might not come back from time to time—but at least we stopped football at Wright State, which is expensive! I mean, that was my whole objection, that football would drain a lot of the important and crucial financial resources away from the academic programs. You know the problems we’re going through now with budget, suppose we had to also fund a football program, so I—

AJ: Yes, we’d be blaming the football—

AS: —yeah—

AJ: like we blame the Nutter Center.

AS: —that’s right. So I thought that the way that we mobilized—and it wasn’t difficult, I mean, but we did it—it wasn’t difficult to mobilize the faculty against starting football here.

AJ: I have a picture here of you with two other past presidents of faculty: Jeanne Ballantine—

AS: —Yeah, Jeanne Ballantine, who was my immediate predecessor, and Jim Sayer—

AJ: —and Jim Sayer—

AS: —who was my successor, yeah.

AJ: —and then here’s another picture of you in your academic garb with two of the Board of Trustee members: Fred Young—

AS: Fred Young who was Chairman of the Board of Trustees at that time and...Mr. Bennett—

AJ: —Mr. Bennett—

AS: —Bill Bennett, who is now still a member of the Board of Trustees, yeah.

AJ: We met with him just yesterday. So you returned to the classroom, primarily, in 1980...?

AS: 1982.

AJ: Two.

AS: September of 1982.

AJ: Okay. And here recently, you've been pulled away from the classroom again and you're back into administration. So you're now Assistant Dean for...

AS: College of Science and Mathematics.

AJ: Yes. So what are your responsibilities as Assistant Dean for the College of Science and Mathematics?

AS: Well the official title is Assistant Dean of Science and Mathematics for Student Affairs, okay. But as you know our Dean left, Rich Millman left, and went on to become Vice President for Academic Affairs at California State University at Saint Marcos, I think. Marc Low, was the Associate Dean, was elevated to Dean, and I came in as an assistant dean. So, for a while, we have since brought Dr. Bob Weisman down as another assistant dean, but he's dealing with special projects, grants and grant proposals. So for the most part, Marc and I are the only two people who are running the Dean's Office. Now Bob Weisman is making an important contribution also. So even though my title says Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, I find myself doing a lot of things—particularly things that Marc doesn't like to do.

AJ: I'm smiling because, you know, that social network, that network which you established at Ohio State is still working, because Marc Low was in that class at Ohio State—

AS: Well, Marc came from Illinois but he was among the first people who came to Wright State—

AJ: —to Wright State, and so—

AS: —actually, and he was recruited by Bob Dixon from Illinois.

AJ: Okay, so it's that Dixon connection.

AS: —but still it's, yeah, it's still a Dixon connection.

AJ: So you guys have kind of been lock-step all the way.

AS: Yeah, we kept it in the family.

AJ: You sure have!

AS: Well there's one thing that I tell, a story I tell about that when you ask what do I do, and I've told this in Marc's presence a number of times. I remember when I first went to college, I first went to Fisk, and I went to college to become a CPA. Of course that was what I thought I wanted to do. But I remember my freshman chemistry teacher tried to recruit me to become a chemist and I told him, no, I was going to be a CPA, and he said, "Why do you want to do that, to clean up other people's stuff?" He didn't quite put it quite as politely as stuff, but "clean up other people's stuff." So I say here it is some forty years later: I'm cleaning up other people's stuff!

AJ: You got the scooper, huh? Okay, over there in the college, about how many black students do you have majoring in the sciences and in mathematics?

AS: We have probably fewer than a hundred, if you want to use that as a benchmark. The majority of them are majoring in psychology, and probably the next-largest group is in the biological sciences, a few in geology and chemistry, and fewer still in mathematics and physics.

AJ: So, do you have any—

AS: So those are the six undergraduate departments in our college.

AJ: Do you have any initiatives to attract students to those other areas where they are underrepresented?

AS: Yes we do. Yes, we have several programs: Dr. [Boucher] has a program at Roth High School, one of the magnet schools in Dayton, and we're bringing those students out. We have a—I mean, that's a year-round program to recruit students mainly in the biological and chemistry areas. We have an initiative out at Trotwood-Madison High School, which Dr. Randy Moore and Arlene Foley have, out in the Trotwood-Madison High School trying to upgrade the biology out at Trotwood-Madison. We have about four summer programs, two of which are residential programs, where we're bringing in high-school kids onto campus this summer.

AJ: So—

AS: So, out of all of those, we're trying to build students to come through the pipeline.

AJ: So what is the projected date that you have that you expect to see the results of all these initiatives? Are you feeling—?

AS: Well, some of them are...

AJ: Seniors?

AS: Some of them are seniors, some of the programs are senior programs; others are ninth, tenth, eleventh grade, and the Upward Bound is eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh grades. So it will be some time, and of course we don't expect all of these students to come to Wright State—

AJ: No, no.

AS: —I mean we hope we get our share of them, but even those that don't come to Wright State, we hope will have good experiences here and go out and spread the word. I remember being on the committee that set up the Horizons in Medicine back around 1976, 1977. John Beljan, who was Dean of the Medical School at that time, was saying that we weren't getting the number of black applicants to our med school and we sort of had to grow our own. And he started the Horizons in Medicine Program, which Allen Pope now directs, at that time. One of Allen's cherished statistics is to go out and show the students who started in that Horizons in Medicine Program between their junior and senior year in high school, and some of those have gone on to college, some of them came to Wright State, but some of them are also going through our Medical School here. So we have four or five graduates of that program who have gone through our Medical School, some who went away to college then came back here to Wright State Medical School, some who came here directly to Wright State. So we're offering scholarships to those students who successfully complete our program, and we hope to get some here.

AJ: How many black faculty do you have in your college?

AS: Well unfortunately, we only have two in the college.

AJ: You got to do something about that.

AS: Well...we doubled it this year! We hired Robert Craig here in Mathematics this year, who's a recent graduate of Ohio State

AJ: Okay, that connection again. Is Moulton still there?

AS: Well you know Moulton went on to become Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents.

AJ: Oh, that's—okay, okay! What changes would you like to see happen here at Wright State University regarding race relations, working with students and black faculty...?

AS: Well, I guess I'd like to see a more sustained effort in terms of improvement; we seem to at Wright State, I guess we do in our general body politic, react to situations rather than having an aggressive plan to be proactive about situations, so—

AJ: I think Mulhollan and Hathaway kind of had a plan—

AS: Sure, sure, sure, sure, sure—

AJ: —that they tried to follow in that area.

AS: —and I think they're...conceptually it's been good. I mean I think operationally it has left a little bit to be desired, but I think I'd like to see a more sustained effort—not just from the President and the Academic Vice President. That's important, but I think from everybody, and I'd like to see us become more open in our discussion of issues. Not just race issues but all issues on campus. I think one of the challenges I see for our commuter campus, and I know we're building more and more dormitories now and we pride ourselves in saying that this year we had more first-year freshman living on campus than off campus, but this is still primarily a commuter school. So you don't have the camaraderie where people stay around and have the blow sessions that you have on a residential campus, and I think there has to be a greater effort made on behalf of the people who are in Student Services—as well as the people who are in Academics, I think—to challenge discussions and activities for us to become more open in our discussions.

AJ: Finally, Al, I'd like to ask you how would you like your tenure at Wright State to be remembered?

AS: Well...what I have enjoyed hearing students say, that I'm "tough but fair."

AJ: I've heard that.

AS: The toughness I could do without but the fairness I really cherish. So that I've been fair, that I've been caring, that I've been involved. I can't remember any tough issues that I have refused to take a stance on. I haven't been shirking, I think, in terms of my social responsibilities on campus. And so that I've been fair, caring, and involved I think would be a good way to be remembered.

AJ: Okay, that's very good. Thank you so very much for coming over and chatting with me.

AS: Okay, thank you for having me.